



The Accommodation Program
New York, New York
800-929-1414

Eight Steps
To
Becoming An
Accommodating
Restaurant



NEW YORK
NEW YORK
WELCOME

*A Source Book
for Enhancing Customer Service*



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Eight Steps To Becoming An Accommodating Restaurant

A Source Book for
Enhancing Customer Service



Sponsored by **The Accommodation Program**
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THE EIGHT STEPS:

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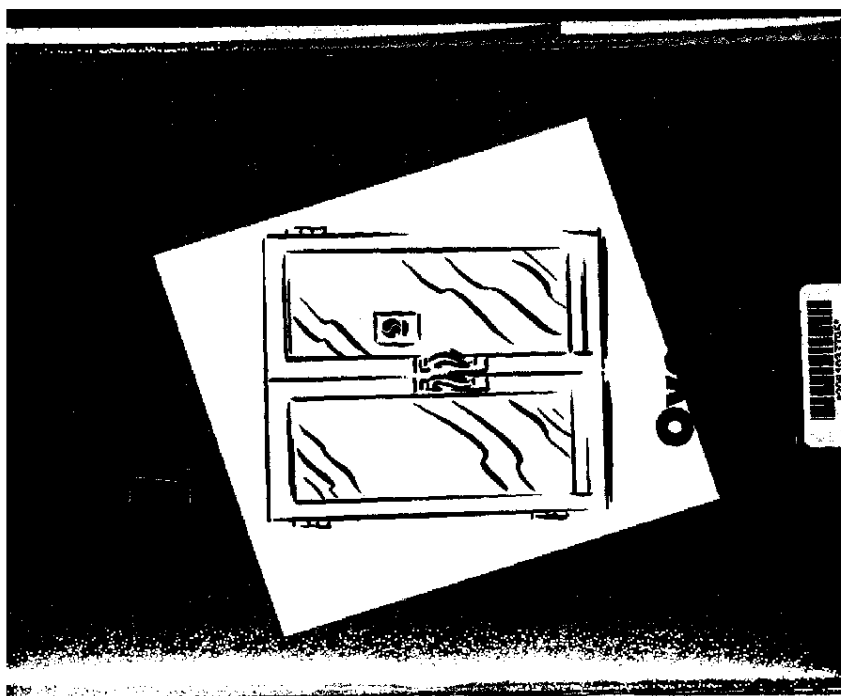
Eight Steps To Becoming An Accommodating Restaurant — Checklist

Providing superior customer service is critical to the successful operation of your business. Restaurateurs are always seeking innovative ways to improve the service provided in their establishments. Customer service can easily be enhanced by following these steps to accommodating your non-smoking and smoking patrons. After reviewing The Accommodation Program Source Book and completing this checklist, you can proudly state that you are an "Accommodating Restaurant."

- ☒ 1. Demonstrate your commitment to all of your customers by designating and clearly marking separate non-smoking and smoking sections. Prominently display The Accommodation Program signage to welcome both non-smokers and smokers at your entrance. Use the catalog for free materials.
- ☐ 2. Allocate non-smoking and smoking seating and table settings according to customer preference to maximize efficiency and minimize any guest complaints.
- ☐ 3. Enhance customer service by training your staff about accommodating non-smokers and smokers. Consider showing the customer service video tape at a staff meeting.
- ☐ 4. Improve your staff's ability to respond to customer complaints.
- ☐ 5. Inspect and, if necessary, improve the performance of your establishment's heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system. For free information and advice about HVAC systems, call the INvironment® Hotline at 1-800-722-9093.
- ☐ 6. Be familiar with your local and/or state laws as they apply to designating non-smoking and smoking areas and have a copy available for customers to review upon request.
- ☐ 7. Clearly mark your non-smoking and smoking sections.
- ☐ 8. Now that you have taken steps to accommodate the preferences of all customers, consider using public relations or direct mail to get the word out about your commitment to customer service.



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Also, results from a USA Today/CNN survey found that a significant majority of Americans favor either designated sections or no restrictions at all in hotels and motels (78%), workplaces (69%) and restaurants (61%).

You should be aware of any local or state laws that may exist in your area regarding non-smoking and smoking regulations. Then, by using this Source Book to establish separate non-smoking and smoking areas (within any existing regulations), to improve your restaurant's ventilation and to enhance customer service, you will be well on your way to providing reasonable accommodations that make every guest feel welcome and comfortable.

Source Books are also available for owners and managers of hotels and bowling centers. To order a free Hotel Source Book, call The Accommodation Program at 1-800-929-1414. To order a free Bowling Center Source Book, call the Bowling Proprietor's Association of America at (817) 649-5105, ext. 214.

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Overview

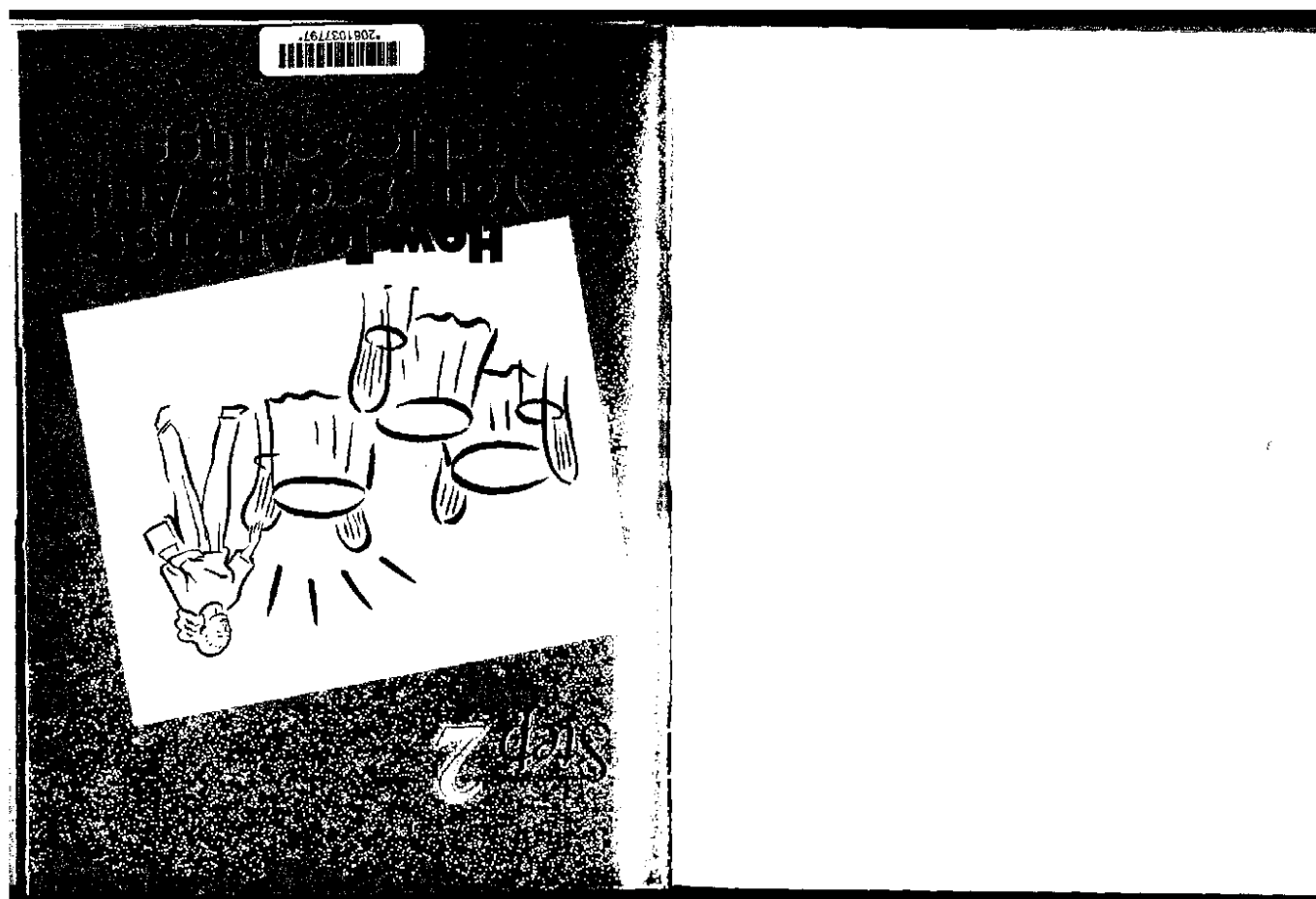
Recognizing and respecting customers' tastes is the cornerstone on which any business is built. The Accommodation Program is a resource designed to help you enhance customer service by providing an accommodating environment for your non-smoking and smoking patrons.

The Accommodation Program was launched nationwide in 1993 and participation from restaurants, hotels, bowling centers and others in the hospitality industry has been extensive and is growing rapidly. The Accommodation Program is supported in nearly every state by a variety of restaurant, tavern, hotel and bowling center trade associations.

To help you meet the preferences of all your customers, this Source Book was developed to offer helpful information about customer service, ventilation, seating arrangements and more. In addition, by participating in The Accommodation Program, business owners demonstrate that they can voluntarily meet the preferences of all customers.

Many restaurant owners are fearful of severely restrictive smoking legislation, since it could result in lost customers and sales for their business. Approximately 25 percent of American adults choose to smoke. According to an independent survey of Association, a national smoking ban could cost the foodservice industry \$18.2 billion per year in lost sales. These sales losses would result from fewer visits and shorter stays by smoking consumers, which would translate into fewer purchases of before-dinner drinks, wine with meals, coffee and other after-dinner drinks and desserts.





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How To Arrange Your Seating And Table Settings

A national poll indicates that a significant majority of Americans (61%) favor separate non-smoking and smoking sections or no restrictions in restaurants — further support for providing an accommodating environment for customers.

The Accommodation Seating Formula contained in this section will help you develop appropriate non-smoking and smoking sections by monitoring the seating preferences of your customers. Other tips to consider include:

- Test consumer preference for non-smoking and smoking sections by using the Accommodation Seating Formula and configuring your seating accordingly.
- Use signage to identify your non-smoking and smoking section(s).
- Be aware of your restaurant's ventilation flow and designate non-smoking and smoking areas accordingly.
- Consider placing your "core" smoking area closest to the building's main air return duct to limit the possible drift of tobacco smoke.
- Utilize existing architectural features wherever possible to configure your non-smoking and smoking sections (e.g. consider using elevated areas as smoking sections).
- Arrange your seating configuration so that non-smokers are not required to pass through the smoking section.
- Allocate some of the best tables for each section (e.g. window or booth).
- Clearly separate and designate areas to accommodate non-smokers and smokers.



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The Accommodation Seating Formula

These six steps and the following worksheet can help you determine the percentage of seating that should be allocated to our non-smoking and smoking sections based on customer preference. You will be able to determine the overall table sizes you need for each section as well as whether or not seating preferences vary by daypart or weekpart.

Ask each party their smoking preference when they make a telephone reservation or arrive at your restaurant.

Track this information for two weeks, using duplicate sheets of the attached worksheet for non-smoking and smoking as well as for each daypart (lunch, dinner, brunch).

Group the tracking sheets for each daypart into two categories: weekday and weekend.

1. Gather the sheets by daypart (e.g. all weekday lunches) and combine the total number of parties from each sheet for a grand total number of parties.

2. Divide the number of parties of each size (e.g. total number of 1-2 tops, total number of 5-6 tops, etc.) by the grand total number of parties for each daypart and category (e.g. weekday lunch, weekday dinner, weekend dinner, weekend brunch) to determine the number of table sizes you need for each daypart.

6. Make note of discrepancies between weekday and weekend patterns. Also, compare daypart totals to see if they vary. If significant differences exist by daypart or weekpart, you may want to vary the size of your sections to match consumer preferences more closely.



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Accommodation Seating Formula Worksheet

How To Arrange Your Seating And Table Settings

Step 3



**Enhancing
Customer Service**



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Enhancing Customer Service

In today's competitive environment, guest retention becomes especially important. A key to building repeat business is paying attention to the fundamentals of hospitality: excellent food, attentive and attentive service. Reasons of business competition, guests will be looking for better establishments than go the extra step in providing a truly satisfying dining experience.

An accommodating both non-smoking and smoking parties is important since adult smokers account for about 75% of all Americans.

In fact, an audit of one national restaurant chain showed the following:

- Smoking party guest checks are typically 8.5% higher than non-smoking party guest checks.
- Non-smoking and smoking parties occupy tables for the same amount of time.
- Preferences for non-smoking and smoking areas vary significantly by daypart, individual establishments and geographic locations.
- On average, smoking parties are longer than non-smoking parties.



How To Be An Accommodating Owner/Manager

- Provide quality accommodations for all customers.
- Educate employees about The Accommodations Program. Show them how it can help to provide better customer service. Consider showing the customer service video tape at a staff meeting. You might also order and distribute customer service tip cards to your servers as a reminder.
- Train employees about the importance of customer service at staff meetings. Keep a manual so employees can quickly refer to information about customer service. (See the "How to Handle Customer Complaints" section on Page 23 of the Source Book.)
- Contact your local or state restaurant association or the National Restaurant Association for information on how to conduct customer service training sessions.
- Solicit input from customers on how you can provide better service.
- Encourage employees to share ideas on how to accommodate customers better.
- Recognize and praise employees who provide superior customer service.
- Pay attention to the total indoor environment including ventilation, temperature, humidity, noise, lighting and cleanliness.

Enhancing Customer Service

Enhancing Customer Service (cont.)

How To Be An Accommodating Host/Hostess

Upon entering the restaurant, the host/hostess is the first person the customer sees. As a host or hostess, the impression you make is very important.

- Ask the customer, "Do you prefer non-smoking or smoking?" By asking this question, and using the Accommodation Seating Formula Worksheet on Page 15, you can quickly determine the proper seating arrangements.
- When taking phone reservations, ask for the customer's non-smoking or smoking preference. This will help you plan seating for the evening.
- Seat customers with no preference for non-smoking or smoking in between the sections in the restaurant.
- Politely inform the smoking customer(s) where smoking is permitted if you recognize or are informed that a smoker is part of a group of non-smokers, and the group chooses the non-smoking section.
- When receiving complaints from non-smokers, try to accommodate them by moving them to another area. Immediately inform the manager of the complaint. (See the "How to Handle Customer Complaints" section on Page 23 of the Source Book).

How To Be An Accommodating Server

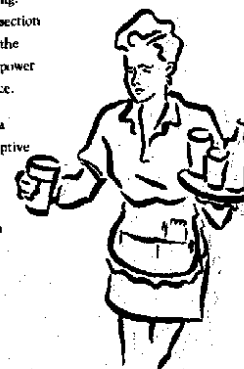
Servers, because they are extremely visible and directly interact the most with customers, probably embody the spirit of the restaurant more than any other employees. As a server, it is critical to provide the highest level of customer service during the dining experience.

Before greeting your customers, inspect their table, chairs and the surrounding area for cleanliness. Make sure that ashtrays are empty and clean and that there are no ashtrays on the table if it is in a non-smoking area.

Cheerfully greet your new customers.

Immediately check with the host/hostess or manager to reseat guests who are not happy with their seating. (See the "How to Handle Customer Complaints" section on Page 23 of the Source Book). Remember that the customer is always right, so do everything in your power to provide him or her with a pleasurable experience.

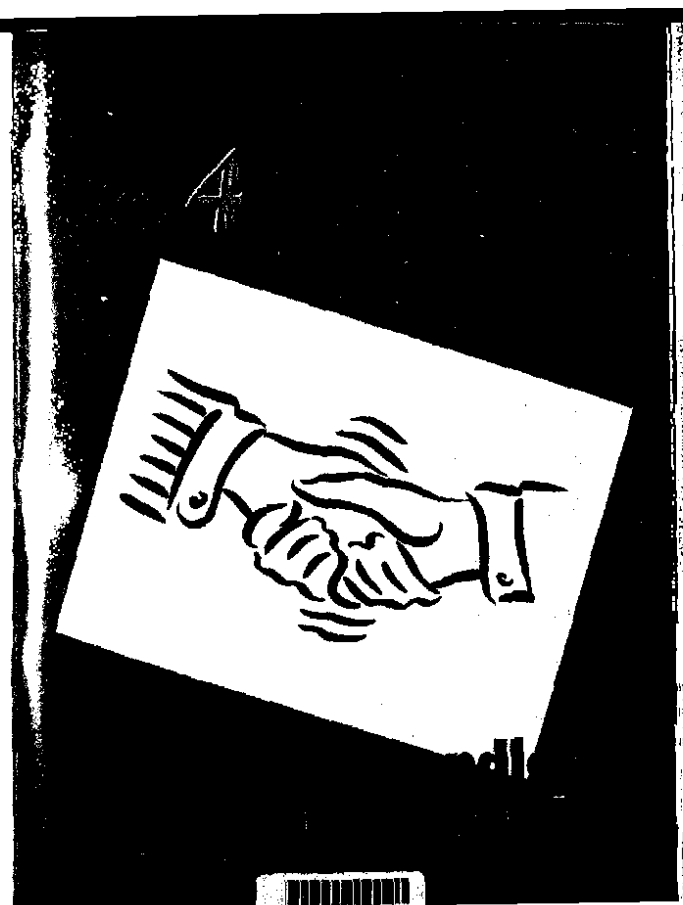
- Notify the manager if you have a problem with a customer if, for example, he or she becomes disruptive or begins to smoke in a non-smoking area.
- Carry an extra pack of matches or a lighter to assist your smoking guests. Know where to obtain cigarettes on behalf of your smoking guests.



Enhancing Customer Service (cont.)

Ashtray Guide For Servers And Bus Employees

- Cap (or cover) ashtrays when walking through the restaurant to eliminate stray ashes from falling onto the floor or tables. Remove capped ashtrays from the table quietly and replace them with clean ashtrays. Also, cap ashtrays when walking through the kitchen area.
- Empty ashtrays and dispose of ashes just before each course is served, even if there is only one cigarette in an ashtray. Replace ashtrays after two cigarettes are extinguished, even if between courses. Extinguish smoldering ashes before disposing.
- Remove ashtrays after each meal and clean.
- Wipe table clear of ashes, matches, cellophane wrap and cigarette packages.
- Make sure non-smoking tables do not have ashtrays on them and that there are adequate numbers of ashtrays and books of matches available on smoking tables (two ashtrays for six tops and three ashtrays for eight tops). Also, remember to place ashtrays in all areas of your restaurant where smoking is permitted, including restrooms, waiting areas, lounges, etc., law permitting.
- If possible, have a separate section available on your bus cket where you can properly dispose of ashes. Carry clean ashtrays, if possible.



How To Handle Customer Complaints

Knowing how to handle customer complaints properly can help you ensure a high level of customer satisfaction. Situations involving complaints should be viewed as opportunities to accommodate customers and establish repeat business.

When Handling Customer Complaints:

- Always look for ways to prevent negative situations from occurring.
- Be sincere and express genuine concern by listening to customers and determining the nature of their complaints.
- Let customers know that you understand how they feel and apologize for any inconvenience. Make sure you use the words "sorry" or "apologize" because they tell customers that you have acknowledged their complaints.
- Inform customers that your restaurant strives to accommodate all of its patrons and that you are eager to make sure every customer's dining experience is pleasurable.

If appropriate, relocate customers to another section of the restaurant that is more to their liking.

- If a disturbance occurs, ask customers to walk to a private area of the restaurant to discuss the complaint.
- After the situation has been corrected, ask customers if there is anything else you can do to make their dining experience more pleasurable.
- Communicate these experiences to appropriate staff members so they also can learn from the situation.

- Require all staff members to make management aware of customer complaints. Management should either handle the complaint personally or authorize the staff to do so.



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When Handling Customer Complaints, Never:

- Resort or get angry with the customer.
- Fail to say "sorry" or "apologize."
- Blame other employees or customers.
- Discuss the situation with other customers.
- Fail to make changes in procedures, including seating arrangements, to reduce the risk of future occurrences.

How To Encourage Customer Compliance

EXAMPLE #1:

SCENARIO: If a guest is seen smoking in a non-smoking area, approach the table with a positive frame of mind, ashtray in hand.

MANAGER: "Good evening, my name is _____. I am the manager on duty. I am terribly sorry, but we have you seated in a non-smoking area. I would like to offer you the very next table in the smoking area or you may smoke in our bar, lounge or waiting area. I apologize for the inconvenience."

Often, the guest will say:

GUEST: "No, I will just put it out. Do you have an ashtray?"

MANAGER: "Yes."



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How To Handle Customer Complaints (cont.)

EXAMPLE #2:

PROBLEM: *A guest is seated in the non-smoking section, near the smoking section. He complains loudly to the server that he can smell smoke.*

SERVER: *"I am terribly sorry that this table is unsatisfactory to you, sir. Our restaurant goes to great lengths to separate seating and enhance ventilation so that our non-smoking and smoking customers are comfortable. May I offer you another table that is located a further distance from our smoking section?"**

Often the guest will say:

GUEST: *"Yes, that would be fine."*

SERVER: *"Right this way, sir."*

* The server should inform the manager of the incident immediately. Depending on restaurant policy, a free amenity might be offered, e.g. free drink or dessert.



Enhancing Your HVAC System

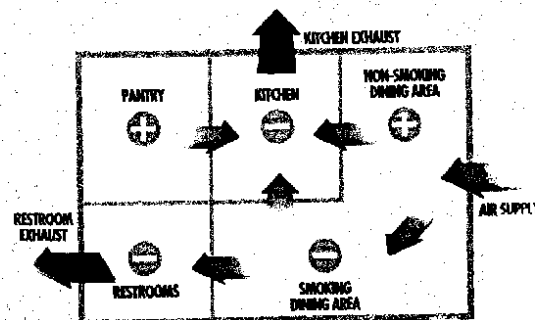
For more advice and information
about HVAC systems,
call the INvironment® Hotline
at 1-800-722-9093.

A properly performing air handling system is a key factor in enhancing the comfort of all your customers. You should consider implementing a regular maintenance and cleaning program for your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system. It may be advisable for one person to take responsibility for the day-to-day concerns and management of this effort. For free advice and information about HVAC systems, call the INvironment® Hotline at 1-800-722-9093.

Creating areas for non-smokers and smokers can help enhance overall indoor air quality when those areas work in conjunction with the restaurant's HVAC system. Consider the following to help define the best solutions for your particular building:

- Outdoor air should be introduced through the ventilation system to dilute the particulates that cause odors in the restaurant.
- Air directional flow is part of a ventilation system that can be controlled to reduce the drift of smoke and odors.

Typical HVAC design promotes the mixing of air as it comes in through the air supply diffusers. Return grilles are located to make sure the air is mixed and not "short-circuiting" across the ceiling. Many complaints about "smoke drift" occur when the air movement from the supply air blows across the smoking area into the non-smoking area. This can be addressed in two steps: situate non-smoking areas where the air enters the room and pushes smoke away; then, locate smoking areas near return or exhaust grilles, where the smoke will be drawn to the exhaust.



Enhancing Your HVAC System

Enhancing Your HVAC System (cont.)

There are always variations in the ways HVAC systems are designed. But if you keep your system clean and in good operating condition, with an adequate supply of outdoor air, you'll have made a good start. Here are some of the practical steps you or your HVAC maintenance company may wish to consider:

- Operate the HVAC system according to manufacturer's instructions. For instance, there should be adequate outside air intake and vents should be kept open during operation.
- Operate the HVAC system properly for acceptable temperature and humidity. A qualified HVAC specialist can help you with this.
- Verify with maintenance professionals that they are checking belts, filters, thermostat and machinery calibration.
- Check air filters for quality and fit. Clean and replace filters when needed.
- Inspect the interior of the air handling unit when checking filters. Be sure the bottom is dry and the drain works properly.
- Clean all visible vent grilles to increase air flow and remove dirt build-up.
- Clean ceiling fans.
- Clean grease from the kitchen exhaust ducts. You may want to consider using a company that specializes in this work.
- Clear the area around your air handling unit. Do not let debris, such as boxes, block air flow and do not store chemicals near or inside your air handling unit.

- Clean and/or paint exterior units to prevent rust. Regularly corrosion treatment if in coastal areas exposed to salt air.
- If you rent space, check your lease to see if it includes the services of an HVAC maintenance specialist. If it does, be sure to schedule regular maintenance inspections with them. If not, ask your building owner/manager to consider including such a service.
- For a list of consulting engineers in your area, call the American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC) at (202) 347-7474. Ask for the Membership Records Department. There is a fee for the list. ACEC can also refer you to a local chapter in your area.

Additional information regarding HVAC design, operation and maintenance, as well as a checklist of operational steps, can be found in the technical bulletin which was mailed with this Source Book. If you have additional technical questions, call the INvironment®.

Hotline free of charge at (800) 722-9090. INvironment is a program developed by the Chubb-Indusid Chubb Group, Ltd. to help provide a combination of information and technical services to improve the quality of the indoor environment. INvironment is a registered trademark of the Chubb Group, Ltd.



Step 6



**Your
Local/State
Laws**



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Your Local/State Laws

If you are not already familiar with the laws that may dictate specific smoking regulations in your area, it is advisable to check with your local or state restaurant association or Chamber of Commerce to ensure that you are complying. You should obtain and review applicable statutes, regulations, and ordinances and keep copies of your state and local laws for easy reference. If a customer has a specific question, you will have easy access to the actual laws or ordinances.

Step 7



Signage

Communicating your smoking policy to customers is very important. Participating in The Accommodation Program is a positive way to inform your customers clearly that you welcome everyone.

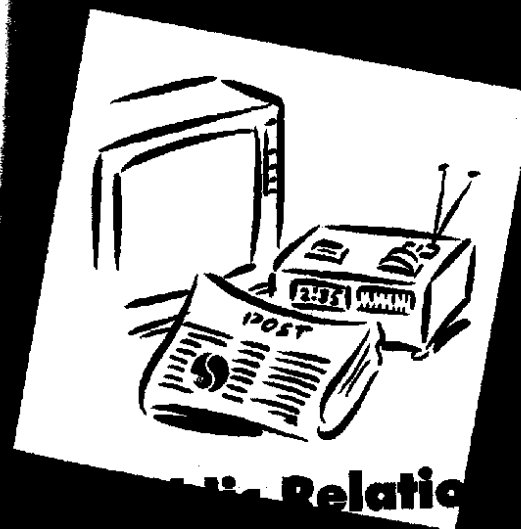
Accommodation signage is available to you **FREE** of charge. The Accommodation Program Symbol will help you to communicate that you have made special provisions for both your non-smoking and smoking customers.

Decal — Place the decal on the door or window of your front entrance so that your customers know before they enter your restaurant they are welcome.

Plaque — The plaque can be hung on the wall or placed on your host/hostess station.

Table Tents — The two versions of the table tents reading "This is the Non-Smoking Section" and "This is the Smoking Section" will help identify each table.

Call 1-800-929-1414 to request The Accommodation Program catalog, and use it to order **FREE** materials and signage.



Public Relations

Now that you have taken steps to accommodate the preferences of all customers, it is time to get the word out about your commitment to customer service. There are a whole host of ways to do this. Here are a few:

Publicity

Restaurants have many opportunities to promote themselves through publicity efforts. Publicity generally refers to free media exposure such as restaurant reviews, articles in local, regional or national publications and short features on television and radio. It is beneficial because it can create public awareness, increase traffic, enhance your reputation, possibly boost sales and generally keep the public informed about your restaurant.

But what constitutes news? Introducing a light luncheon menu; dining room expansion or remodeling; restaurant involvement in a community event; or a major appointment or promotion are all examples of newsworthy information about your establishment.

To get your news "out on the street" you should be aware of the principal local publicity outlets in your area. They can include: daily newspapers, weekly suburban newspapers, special interest publications, TV/radio stations, and city magazines.



It is important to become familiar with the restaurant critics in your community and their editorial interests if you haven't already. Beyond restaurant critics, there are a number of other media contacts that may be interested in news from your establishment.

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few examples of print media contacts and their interests include:

Food Editor — If you have an expertise in food preparation, make yourself available as a source of authoritative information to this editor.

Business Editor — This editor may be interested in your managerial staff hirings, promotions or other business-related activities. If you come across an interesting article in a restaurant trade magazine, especially surveys or trend stories, you may want to pass it on and offer your perspective.

Real Estate Editor — If you make major architectural changes/interior facelifts or sign a new lease, let this editor know.

Lifestyle Editor — This editor may be interested in staff members with unusual talents or interests, or an interesting story about one of your regular customers.

News Editor — Inform this editor if you participate in community drives, hold a special event, know of a staff member who has performed a public service, or if you are involved in any other community-related activity.

If you have a story idea and are not sure which editor to approach, call the publication or station and ask for the city desk. You will be directed to the proper editor. You also may want to contact your state restaurant association for help in promoting your establishment.

When working with radio and television media, opportunities to get your story on the air are somewhat limited, but not altogether impossible. One example of the type of on-premise events that might make it onto a news broadcast would be a function involving a local political figure or well-known celebrity.



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Public Relations (cont.)

Another broadcast opportunity is the talk show. You may want to consider contacting the producer of a local TV or radio talk show and suggest a segment on a food- or restaurant-related topic. Your suggestion should be of broad general interest such as changing patterns in dining out, new ways to scr-fry, or good restaurant manners to name a few.

Additionally, you may want to develop a short paragraph describing your establishment that can be used in restaurant guides or other such publications. Be sure to mention your food style, hours of operation, credit cards accepted, and other special customer services such as The Accommodation Program.

Direct Mail

The direct mail technique is a great way to inform, persuade and remind your established and potential customers about your restaurant. The opportunities to use direct mail are almost inexhaustible.

Here is a small sampling:

- Announce a new restaurant opening
- Announce new menu items or other amenities
- Announce new customer service program — The Accommodation Program
- Introduce special promotions
- Extend birthday/anniversary wishes
- Offer private rooms for special or business events
- Share rave reviews with patrons
- Welcome a new business neighbor to the community

Direct mail can be very cost effective since it offers flexible timing and can target specifically the customers you wish to reach.

Community Relations

A vital aspect of your promotional activities is the cultivation of friendships with other members of the hospitality industry. For example, get to know the major hotels in your community. Encourage them to direct hotel guests to your establishment when restaurant recommendations are requested.

It also is wise to make similar contacts with the local taxi company. While it may be impossible to speak with every cab driver, you may want to talk to the dispatcher and leave information (or coupons) about your restaurant for him or her to distribute.

Additionally, make your establishment known to the large employers in your community. You may want to attract employee and company entertainment business.



Public Relations (cont.)

Questions from the media

At some point, the media may ask you specifically about The Accommodation Program. The following messages may help you respond:

- "We recognize that all guests are important regardless of their preference to not smoke or smoke."
- "We neither advocate smoking nor encourage non-smoking; we are providing a service to all our customers."
- "We participate in The Accommodation Program and display the symbol because we're responsive to the preferences of both non-smokers and smokers."
- "We are aware that some people prefer to be seated in a non-smoking section and that others enjoy smoking when they dine."
- "We demonstrate our commitment to customer service by participating in The Accommodation Program which accommodates both non-smoking and smoking preferences and encourages paying attention to overall areas of customer service including proper ventilation, room configuration and other service-related issues."
- "As a business establishment, we prefer to manage our own business and voluntarily satisfy the non-smoking and smoking preferences of all our customers."



Telephone
Directory



Telephone/Resource Directory:

The Accommodation Program..... (800) 929-1414
(To order additional FREE materials)

INvironment® Hotline..... (800) 722-9093
(For FREE HVAC information)

American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC).... (202) 347-7474
(Association provides a list of consulting engineers in
your area for a fee. ACEC can also refer you to a local
chapter in your area.)
1015 Fifteenth Street N.W., Suite 802
Washington, DC 20005

National Restaurant Association..... (202) 331-5900
1200 Seventeenth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-3097

For weekly updates on pending legislation..... 1 (800) NEWS-NRA

For easy reference, use the following section to fill
in the names of your local and state associations:

Your Local and/or State Restaurant Association(s):

() _____

() _____

